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Ham-Policy Digest Mon, 15 Nov 93 Volume 93 : Issue 454

Today's Topics:

Sell the spectrum? (was: THE argument for CW requirements)

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We trust that readers are intelligent enough to realize that all text
herein consists of personal comments and does not represent the official
policies or positions of any party. Your mileage may vary. So there.

Date: 15 Nov 1993 01:20:28 GMT
From: drt@athena.mit.edu
Subject: Sell the spectrum? (was: THE argument for CW requirements)
To: ham-policy@ucsd.edu

I was about to cause the net a terminal case of MEGO with another volley
in the code thread when Gary said something interesting :

In article <1993Nov14.152133.12172@ke4zv.atl.ga.us> gary@ke4zv.atl.ga.us (Gary
Coffman) writes:

drt wrote:

>Imagine Bill Clinton said, "we're gonna stop collecting taxes by
>force, and take up neighborhood collections." Sounds good, eh? But
>when the government girl scout gets to your door, what do you do?
>Give a buck or maybe two, right? Nothing, maybe, figuring you might
>as well keep your money, and other people will give? Well, no one
>else gives, either. \$500 million total for the entire Federal
>government. Tops. But you still expect Social Security for people in
>your family and Interstates to ride on and an FCC to license you and
>patrol the airwaves and school aid and Student Loans and Scientific
>Grants and a Supreme Court to protect your rights and on and on.

>
>Public goods disappear when you stop paying the price publicly. But
>that doesn't mean they weren't valuable. This is called the "free
>rider" problem. If a bus charges a voluntary fare, no one in his
>right mind will pay his share of the full cost of operating the bus,
>and the bus goes broke. Too many "free riders" taking benefits but
>contributing nothing. But we don't know that that bus wasn't worth
>the fare it would have taken to keep it running.

Actually, I tend to be a Jeffersonian in these matters. I'd much prefer the government to keep it's greedy hands out of my pockets and leave me to take care of my own welfare. Most "public goods" should be handled by user fees such as tolls for roads. No public bus system in the country breaks even today. They must be subsidized by general taxpayer funds as the riders get at least a partial free ride. *That's* a distortion of the market. A private system would have to operate in such a way that it could turn a profit from fares by providing a service that's worth it's cost, but government doesn't have a clue about responsible operation. The Federal government's only legitimate functions that can't be handled totally by user fees are providing for the common defense and settling disputes among the States.

In 1981 the Taxpayer's Union released a study that showed that a Chevrolet Caprice Classic cost \$600 plus tax. That's every tax all the way back to extracting the ore out of the ground, including payroll taxes for the workers, etc. Think how much more *private good* we would have with the government's hand out of our pockets. The real tragedy of the commons is that no one owns it, so no one has an incentive to operate it as a long term asset.

How'd they get that? In the US, all levels of Government only tax on the order of 40% of GDP overall. That figure implies 95%. Something's very wrong with that figure.

But the interesting part is your libertarian profession. Was I right in surmising that you, as a libertarian type, believe spectrum rights should be sold off or at least leased to the highest bidder? It seems the only way for you to be consistent about user fees. I wonder why you didn't comment on the idea, and if you would do so now?

-drt

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| `Most political sermons teach the congregation nothing except |
| what newspapers are taken at the Rectory.' -C.S. Lewis |

End of Ham-Policy Digest V93 #454

